

Police recall '63 death

By Earl Golz

Staff Writer of The News

Dallas police officers on duty when President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed said Monday's attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan brought them "a sinking feeling, a repeat of a bad dream."

They also said:

■ Monday's incident, once again, shows such violence "can happen any time, any place."

■ "There's no way to totally protect an official. The only way you could is if the president were encased in a steel vault. But, even then, a determined individual still could find a way — some sort of explosive device."

■ Stiff gun control laws do not provide a realistic solution since "people who commit these crimes will get guns illegally . . . the only people who will comply with gun control laws will be the victims."

Dallas County Sheriff's Department Capt. Gus Rose, who had been a police homicide sergeant when Kennedy was killed on Nov. 22, 1963, said he had just walked into his office at the courthouse when he learned of the assassination attempt on President Reagan.

"I got that sinking feeling again," Rose said. "It made me sick at my stomach — it brought back a whole lot of memories."

Despite Monday's incident, however, Rose said his views on gun control have not changed. "I am not for gun control," he said. "I don't feel any different than I did. People who commit these crimes will get guns illegally. . . . The only people who will comply with gun control laws will be the victims."

Most Dallas police officers who witnessed the Kennedy assassination or in some way were involved in the aftermath are retired.

One of those, former detective James Leavelle, said he hoped the Highland Park roots of accused Reagan assailant John W. Hinckley Jr. don't rekindle the old hatreds di-

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13

City blamed in '63, police say

Continued from Page 18A.

rected toward Dallas after 1963.

Leavelle, who was standing next to Lee Harvey Oswald when Jack Ruby shot him in the basement of the Dallas police station, said the shooting of Reagan was "a little bit different . . . than the Ruby deal."

"We were more or less alerted to expect something in 1963," said Leavelle, who now is a private investigator. "But, in this instance today (involving Reagan), there was no forewarning. And, whereas one shot was fired by Ruby, I assume there were several today."

Leavelle said his immediate reaction to Monday's shooting was "about the same as before (in 1963), except I can relate to it a lot better . . . the scene around the hospital and the traffic and people hurrying helter-skelter."

Assassinating public officials, even in 1981, "can be done and there's virtually nothing you can do to stop him (the assassin)," Leavelle said. "If a person can't do it at one place, he can pick a spot on down the road. . . . The only thing you can do is put a protective bubble over the president when he's in public."

Jack Revill, an assistant Dallas police chief, expressed similar feelings. He also said he was relieved the at-

tempt occurred in Washington and not in Dallas.

Dallas Police Chief Glen King, who had been on duty in his 3rd-floor office at the Dallas police station when Kennedy was killed, said he was "not going to comment on the similarities or dissimilarities" between the Kennedy and Reagan shootings since he (King) was not in Washington. He did say, however, that both shootings "did occur in public places . . . and there was a substantial amount of security around the president in both instances."

Jesse E. Curry, the Dallas police chief when Kennedy was assassinated, died on June 22, 1980. Another member of the Dallas Police Department in November 1963, former Dallas police chief and now Sheriff Don Byrd, was out of town Monday and not available for comment.

One of Byrd's assistant chief deputies, J.C. Bowles, was a police communications supervisor in 1963. "In a free society, it's impossible (to protect the president)," he said. "The job is public and you (the president) have to be part of the public. A man can't conceive every possible way to protect himself."

Jack Watson, a dispatcher at the sheriff's office in 1963 and now an assistant communications supervisor,

said: "I was the dispatcher (when Kennedy was shot). I heard the shots fire." He said he "could empathize with the trauma the law enforcement officers are going through in Washington Thank God, the president is going to come out of it. . . ."

"There's no way to totally protect an official. The only way you could is if the president were encased in a steel vault. But, even then, a determined individual still could find a way — some sort of explosive device."

W.G. Lumpkin, the Dallas policeman leading the presidential motorcade in 1963, said the shooting Monday shows, "It can happen any time, any place. My reaction was that I remembered Eric Seavereid saying that Dallas was a 1-horse town when it happened (in 1963). And condemning the police and everybody else. And, today, it's in Washington."

"Dallas is not the only place that's got nuts."

Murray Jackson, who had been a Dallas police dispatcher in 1963, said: "I'm like everybody else, just appalled by the whole thing."

"It's a terrible thing. But I made the remark to my wife, 'At least it didn't happen in Dallas this time. . . . We were kind of condemned (in 1963) . . . that we let this happen. Well, here it is in the capital now.'"







Church conference participants pause Monday at First Baptist Church to offer prayers for President Reagan. *Dallas Morning News: Juan Garcia*